



People With Disabilities

ACT Inc

Annual Report 2012

Financial Year: 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012

This report is available on our website:

www.pwdact.org.au

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Executive Officer

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This Report covers the activities of People With Disabilities ACT Inc from September 2011 to October 2012 and the Association's financial transactions for the 2011, 2012 financial year. The Report has been prepared to reflect PWD ACT's Strategic Plan and business Plan which in turn reflects PWD ACT's obligations under its funding agreement with Disability ACT. This Plan can be found on our Website.

Under this Agreement, PWD ACT is required to:

- ◆ Implement six measures which act to increase the informed debate of issues affecting people with disabilities and which builds the capacity of people with disabilities to advocate on issues which affect them;
- ◆ Maintain one annual project which works to build an evidence base about the relevant needs of people with disabilities in the ACT; and
- ◆ Involvement in systemic advocacy projects which addresses issues affecting people with disabilities in the ACT.

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PWD ACT Activities

Newsletter

The PWD ACT Newsletter 'Out and About With Ability' has been published each month. Maida has undertaken much of the work in preparing this Newsletter. This year in addition to the regular columns on employment, health and well-being and sport and recreation, we have information about our own activities and activities of member organisations and ACT Government agencies. Our Newsletter has also included articles on advocacy issues provided by our Executive Officer and information on the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We would like to see more contribution from people with disabilities themselves include contributions to columns we have available for 'letters' and 'helpful hints'. We continue to receive favorable comment on the Newsletter from people with disabilities and staff of disability service organisations who find the Newsletter a valuable source of information.

Member Activities

Our AGM was held on Tuesday 11 September 2011 in the large meeting room at the Pearce Community Centre. In addition to the AGM those attending were inspired to hear from Huy Nguyen about his travels in East Timor. Huy, who uses a wheelchair, was a member of an Australian Team from Plan International and he used his lived experience of disability to help his colleagues make their water and sanitation projects accessible for people with disabilities.

PWD ACT participated in the celebrations of the International Day for People With Disabilities on Saturday 3 December 2011. Our organisation partnered with Muscular Dystrophy ACT to celebrate this day by inviting members of the public to join us at the Canberra Museum and Gallery to fold paper cranes. This activity was in keeping with the IYDP theme of peace which was the theme for 2011. PWD ACT thanks Muscular dystrophy Act for combining with us in this activity and NICAN for providing a grant of funds to make this activity possible. Our activity was one of the IDPWD day activities covered by WIN News

Membership of PWD ACT continues to be free of charge to people with disabilities and this fact is promoted through our Newsletter. Organisational Members of PWD ACT pay a small fee and are acknowledged in the Newsletter. In 2011-2012 we experienced only a small growth in membership. Membership participation is one of the subjects to be dealt with by the Review Panel Report to be discussed later in this meeting.

Update PWD ACT's Website

Maida has regularly updated our website with Newsletters, PWD ACT activities and submissions and NDIS news. However, the work of re-developing our website has not proceeded as fast as we wanted and our website is still not the attractive and interactive site we want it to be. The Review Panel have

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made recommendations for the revamping and renewal of our website which they will present to this meeting.

Regular Meetings with Stakeholders

PWD ACT has attended three of the four forums for funded organisations conducted by Disability ACT during the reporting period. At these forums, PWD ACT provides input arising from the lived experience of disability and with a disability rights perspective in a forum which is numerically dominated by service providers. In this forum we work closely with the other Act consumer and advocacy organisations to influence the discussions to outcomes which provide greater benefit to people with disabilities.

In addition to these forums, PWD Act meets separately with Disability ACT each three months. At these meetings, we hear from Disability ACT about its programs and policies and how they relate to programs and policies in other Act Government agencies. PWD ACT uses these meetings to raise issues of concern to our members. This has included the approach to NDIS implementation and the progress of the Strategy for the employment of People With Disabilities in the AC Public Service.

PWD ACT places importance on working collaboratively with consumer and advocacy organisations. One of the ways we do this is through the regular two monthly meetings of the ACT Disability Advocacy Network (ACTDAN.) ACTDAN is a forum for ACT consumer and advocacy organisations to come together to exchange information and collaborate on matters of common concern. It has no formal status and is not a funded body. Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) provides the secretariat support necessary for us to meet and work together. PWD ACT worked with ACTDAN members to advocate for the trial of supported decision-making in the ACT and to organize a candidates forum for people with disabilities in the lead up to the Act election.

PWD ACT continues to be a member of the Disability Advocacy Network of Australia (DANA) and a member of the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS.) PWD ACT is a member of the ACTCOSS Peak Body Forum and has contributed to a number of ACTCOSS submissions providing a disability perspective on a number of issues. In particular PWD ACT contributed to submissions in relation to:

The amendment of ACT Human Rights Laws to include Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: In relation to this submission we welcomed the recent change to the ACT Human Rights Act to recognize the right to education;

- The ACT Government's Strategy for Targeted Assistance;
- The Act Government's draft Transport Policy; and
- Act Government Housing Policy.
- PWD ACT also made its own submission to these inquiries. PWD ACT policy submissions are available on our website.

Employment of People With Disabilities in the ACT Public Service

This is an issue on which PWD Act continues to monitor the ACT Government's performance. In response to our own report, 'Making Diversity Work', which was launched in December 2009, the ACT Government, in March 2011, launched its Employment Strategy for People With Disabilities. However, since that launch, the momentum has slowed to a crawl and the lack of progress in this important aspect of social policy is frustrating. As best we can ascertain, the Strategy has halted the decline in the employment of people with disabilities in the Act Public Sector but not increased it yet. As part of our advocacy on the implementation of the Act launch site for the NDIS, we will be advocating for the ACT Government to grasp this opportunity to employ people with disabilities to do the work to develop and implement the launch site in addition to being attuned to opportunities to employ people with disabilities across the Act public sector.

PWD ACT also seeks to promote the capability and employability of people with disabilities whenever we can do so. In November 2011, I participated in a segment screened on the 7.30 Report on the participation of people with disabilities in the community with particular reference to employment and access to public buildings.

Develop Organisational Capability

Governance

At the AGM in September 2011 the following people were elected to the Management Committee:

President:	Joshua Brown,
Secretary:	Sarah Ferguson,
Treasurer;	Alison Chinn and
Committee Member	Terry Millar

Trevor Robinson, did not seek re-election to the Committee. I acknowledge his contribution to PWD ACT's Management Committee and his continuing work for people with spinal cord injuries.

In January 2012, we received with regret the resignation of Alison Chin as Treasurer. On behalf of PWD ACT thank Alison for her considerable service to PWD, in particular as Treasurer, and thank her for her continuing support for Maida and I as we assume responsibility for maintaining PWD Act's accounts.

As PWD ACT had a board of only 3 people, it was deemed necessary to have a Special General Meeting to elect a new Board. This meeting was held on Saturday 10 March at the SHOUT Office. At this meeting the following people were elected to the Management Committee:

President	Terry Millar
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Secretary Sarah Ferguson;

Treasurer Juan Delatorre; and

Committee Member Sue Carbone

Subsequently, Juan Delatorre decided not to take up the role of Treasurer but to stay as a Committee member.

Since March 2012, the Treasurer's responsibilities have been carried out by the Administrative Officer and the Executive Officer under the Committee's supervision. I record my personal appreciation to Maida who has taken this role on herself.

In April 2012, Samantha Davidson Fuller was appointed to the Committee. However, Samantha has not been able to attend meetings due first to work commitments and then to illness and in August 2012 was given leave of absence from Committee responsibilities until the AGM. We thank Samantha for her short time with us on the Committee and wish her well for her future.

PWD ACT employed two staff, Robert Altamore as Executive Officer for 20 hours a week and Maida Kajkic as Administrative Officer for 14 hours a week. The Management Committee met monthly on the second Tuesday of the month for two hours except for the months of January and February 2012. The Committee has conducted the Association's affairs. One decision of the Committee was to outsource the payroll function to Amanda Plowright of the SHOUT Office. Amanda performs this function for several other SHOUT members and we thank her for taking it on for PWD ACT and supporting the Committee to ensure that PWD AC meets its salary, taxation and superannuation obligations to its employees.

PWD Act Review Panel

An outcome of the Special Meeting held in March 2012 was to agree to an organizational review of PWD ACT to be conducted by a Review Panel comprising people who were significant people in the Act disability community with a strong background in disability advocacy and organizational administration. The Review Panel consisted of

Craig Wallace, former President of PWD Act and former Chair of the Act Disability Advisory Council;

Sue Salthouse, Convener of Women With Disabilities ACT and current Co-Chair of the ACT Expert Group for the implementation of the ACT NDIS Launch Site;

Sean Fitzgerald, former Committee member of PWD ACT; and

David Long, current Chairperson of the ACT Disability Advisory Council.

The Review Panel's Report is to be presented to today's meeting.

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PWD ACT Needs Committee Members

If we don't get a Committee for this year, PWD ACT cannot continue to function as an organisation, accept and account for our Government funding and properly represent people with disabilities in the ACT. In particular, we will not be able to take up the opportunities afforded by the ACT being an NDIS launch site to influence the way in which the ACT launch site is designed and implemented.

Finances

The financial Report was prepared by Maida Kajkic and myself with invaluable assistance from Alison Chinn. The accounts were audited by John Wilson.

PWD ACT incurred a deficit for this year. This continues the trend of the last few years in which the organisation has incurred a deficit. During the 2011-2012 PWD ACT received its recurrent grant from Disability ACT and a grant of \$500 to reimburse PWD ACT for an airfare incurred for Terry Millar to represent PWD ACT at a meeting of National consumer and advocacy organisations for the NDIS. We express our appreciation to the Canberra Southern Cross Club for its grant of \$1,000.00 and to our Organisational Members for their continuing organizational and financial support.

ACT Budget

In June 2012, PWD ACT was asked to appear before the At Assembly Estimates Committee of Inquiry into the 2012 ACT Budget. I appeared before the Committee and made submissions on three issues:- the lack of growth funding for support services for people with disabilities;

The lack of funding for initiatives to prepare people with disabilities to participate in the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme; and

The lack of funding for advocacy services. I also raised the issue of the inaccessibility of budget papers for people who use screen reader software, an issue which had persisted for some time. Following my presentation to the Committee, I was able to make those same points when I was interviewed on WIN News. In relation to NDIS preparations, PWD ACT welcomed the announcement of funding to Advocacy for Inclusion and ADACAS for trial projects to equip people with disabilities with decision-making and self-advocacy skills which is an outcome of the submissions and advocacy of both organisations. The Committee in its report also recommended that the ACT Government address the issue of the inaccessibility of the Budget Papers.

Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

PWD ACT continues to work with the other ACT consumer and advocacy organisations and a number of individuals who have a particular interest and expertise on this matter. After a protracted tender process, the Government, on the eve of the election, finally announced that the long promised WATS Centralised Booking Service would commence soon. PWD ACT is seeking a meeting with the provider of this service and we will continue to actively advocate on this issue. Problems with WATS services do not

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go away. Last month, there were two media items within a week highlighting the poor quality of the WATS service in Canberra.

Disability Parking Spaces

There are a number of issues relevant to disability parking spaces. The first relates to the enforcement of the law to reserve disability parking spaces for those people who have disability parking permits. In April this year, the Canberra Times highlighted the numbers of people issued with infringement notices for illegally parking in these spaces. PWD ACT was interviewed for this article and I was quoted. The article resulted in my participation in an open line talk session on Radio 666 and an interview with Mike Welsh on Two CC. PWD ACT continues to advocate for enforcement of parking laws to preserve these spaces for permit holders and also supports a public education campaign to make people aware of the need to preserve those spaces for those who need them. The consequence for a person with a disability of not being able to find a disability parking space can mean that they miss a medical appointment, a job or the simple pleasure of a cup of coffee with a friend.

The second issue is the outcome of the recent changes to the layout of designated disability parking spaces resulting from an amendment to the Australian Standard for these spaces in May 2011. The effect of the change to the Standard is to reduce the width of the parking space and to add a shared zone on one side of the parking space. It was the intention that this shared zone would allow people with wheelchairs or mobility aids to use the shared zone to get themselves and their wheelchair or mobility aid out of their vehicle. However, as the shared zone was only on one side of the parking space, it was often necessary to reverse into the parking space to use it. This was difficult for many drivers. The shared space was marked with lines indicating that it was a no parking area. However, many people either did not know the purpose of the shared space or ignored the parking restrictions and parked vehicles in it. The outcome was that the people with disabilities, for whom the parking space and shared zone were meant, could not access the parking spaces. Robyn also explained that in many instances, the only practical way to use the space was to park the vehicle in the shared area and this exposed the driver to the risk of a parking fine.

PWD ACT convened a public meeting on disability parking spaces which was held at the Southern Cross Club on 23 November 2011. On a cold wintery night, 15 people attended the meeting and a further 8 sent in written comments. Not one person supported the changed layout of parking spaces. At the request of the meeting PWD ACT wrote to Standards seeking a review of the changes to the Standard. Standards Australia has declined our request.

PWD Act continued to receive complaints about the roll out of the new parking spaces in the ACT. The ACT has put a moratorium on the roll out of the new spaces. However, this issue, the perceived reduction in the size and number of disability parking spaces continues to make this issue the one which most frequently comes to our attention.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

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PWD ACT welcomes the ACT Government's agreement to host a launch site for the NDIS. The ACT launch site is of National significance as it is the only launch site at which the NDIS will be implemented across all age groups on a jurisdiction wide basis.

PWD ACT co-sponsored with disability services the meeting at which the Act Government announced the Exert Group to advise it on the design and implementation of the launch site. PWD ACT also co-sponsored with NDS the Expert group's first two Town Hall meetings. Prior to this PWD ACT actively advocated for the participation of people with disabilities in the design and implementation of the then proposed NDIS. In February this year, Disability ACT, funded the airfare for our President Terry Millar to attend a meeting of the National disability and consumer organisations on this issue. Terry and I also attend the National organisations meeting held in Canberra in May 2012. In addition, the ACT Government funded Terry Millar as a member of its delegation to a conference in New Zealand on individual choice and service delivery. Disability ACT is using the information from this conference in its development of the ACT NDIS launch site.

Access to the Environment

PWD Act continues to advocate for barrier free and universally accessible physical environment. Our activity with respect to disability parking is one aspect of this advocacy. In other submissions relating to our comments on the Government's draft transport policy and on housing, we have highlighted how the inaccessibility of the physical environment prevents people with disabilities from living the ordinary life we take for granted such as going shopping or enjoying an outing with friends.

Sport and Recreation and the Arts

PWD ACT sees participation of people with disabilities in sport and recreation and the arts as important measures of social inclusion. Accordingly, we register our disappointment that the organisers of the 2012 Canberra Marathon have, for the second year in a row, have refused participation to a person whose chosen method of participation was by use of a hand cycle. We are also disappointed that the ACT Government, a sponsor of the Marathon, has for the second year in a row, failed to intervene in the matter to ensure that a community event which it sponsors and facilitates was open to people with disabilities. PWD Act's newsletter contains much information on opportunities to participate in artistic cultural, social and sporting events. We will continue to advocate for the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in community events.

ACTION Buses Accessible Transport Consultation Committee

I have represented PWD ACT on this Committee. On this Committee, PWD ACT works with ACTION staff and representatives of other disability organisations to review ACTION'S policies relevant to people with disabilities. This year the Committee convened a consultation on the provision of audio announcements during journeys and real time information to passengers during bus journeys and to people waiting at bus stops. We still wait for these innovations which have been available for some time in other jurisdictions such as Western Australia.

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Government Services

PWD ACT made two submissions in relation to levels of service provided by Government Agencies. We joined with other community organisations to raise concerns about the Commonwealth Government's actions in amalgamating Medicare and Centrelink services and closing a Centrelink Office in Lanyon and a Medicare office in Civic. In letters to all four Federal Members, PWD ACT drew attention to the disproportionate impact of these closures on people with disabilities. PWD ACT also provided information for an article in the Chronicle by Senator Humphries and printed the response to our letter by Dr Leigh in our Newsletter. However, the Government has not reversed these decisions.

The other service matter we raised was the long waiting times experienced by people calling the ACT Government on its central number 132 281. We pointed out that many people with disabilities only have prepaid mobile phones and the long waiting times use up their limited credit. The Officer responsible for the ACT Government Call Centre explained that more staff were being engaged. However long waiting times would persist. He suggested people avoid peak times such as at the start and end of the working day. However, PWD ACT feels this response inadequate and will be taking up this matter again.

UN Convention on the Rights of People With Disabilities

PWD ACT uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People With Disabilities to promote the progressive improvement of services and facilities for people with disabilities and to promote awareness of them and their rights. PWD ACT includes references to the Convention and to individual Convention Articles in its written and presentations to government where they are appropriate. PWD ACT welcomes the ACT government's commitment to amend the ACT Human Rights Act to include economic, social and cultural rights and welcomes the inclusion of educational rights as the first step in this important reform.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the support I have received from individual committee members and their spouses. I commend to you Maida Kajkic for her work for PWD ACT and her commitment to our organisation. I believe PWD ACT has an important role to play in Canberra's disability sector as the only organisation in Canberra which is conducted by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. We bring the lived experience of disability as a unique perspective to our advocacy and information sharing activities and I hope we will continue to do this for many years to come.

Robert Altamore OAM CM BA LLB

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Executive Officer